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From study let a man proceed to meditation, and from meditation to study; by perfection in both the Supreme Spirit becomes manifest. —VISHNU PURANA.

THEOSOPHY

Vol. XXVIII January, 1940 No. 3

"THEOSOPHY AND THEOSOPHISTS"

"THEOSOPHY and Theosophists," H. P. B. wrote in the first issue of the *Theosophist,* "have existed ever since the first glimmering of nascent thought made man seek instinctively for the means of expressing his own independent opinions." In a later issue she said: "Be he what he may, once that a student abandons the old and trodden highway of routine, and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought — Godward — he is a Theosophist; an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth with 'an inspiration of his own' to solve the universal problems."

Such statements, from the one to whom the present generation of theosophists owes the very existence in the world of their common name, philosophy and objective, must forever bar any sectarian spirit from Theosophical work, any pride of idea or pretense of spiritual preferment. In these broad definitions, any man who honestly seeks the truth, who works for the disenthralment of human thought and the elimination of superstition, *is a theosophist.* There are indefatigable laborers for the common betterment of mankind in the ranks of education, of science and religion; men and women whose moral worth, whose fearlessness and love of freedom have earned them the right to be called theosophists, whatever their individual beliefs or theories. Good soldiers are defined by their bravery, not by joining an army; the lovers of mankind show by their lives the brotherhood which is the core and essence of spiritual knowledge.

For many, it is a paradox that the Theosophical Movement, while disclaiming any creed or dogma, still represents a body of teaching rising from certain fundamental principles. To this may be added the statement of H. P. B.: "Mere physical philanthropy, apart from the infusion of new influences and ennobling conceptions of life in the minds of the masses, is worthless. The gradual assimilation by mankind of great spiritual truths will alone revolutionize

the face of civilization." But there is no paradox when we remember that "The Society is a philanthropic and scientific body for the propagation of the idea of brotherhood on *practical* instead of *theoretical* lines." The principles of Theosophical philosophy make the efforts of Theosophists to be brothers *practical*; for students, there are no principles, no knowledge, apart from practice.

H. P. B. could and did record the Wisdom of all ages. She could *not*, however, impart to men a living realization of the difference between a formal statement of the truth and *knowledge*. Again and again she affirmed the importance of this difference, but left to each student the task of learning from experience how mind and heart must be united. By virtue of this, the greatest of all evolutionary labors, the student of Theosophy can feel only humility in regarding those who truly live what they know, however little or simple may be their knowledge. We have not so mastered the workings of the Law of Karma that we can stand in judgment over this one or that who, having had, as we think, the opportunity, does not "accept" the truth. The mysteries of psychic, intellectual and spiritual evolution are great, our understanding limited. There are in the world, prominent in the affairs of men, not a few who reflect that height of ideal and tenacity of purpose which bespeak a hidden familiarity with the highest of resolves—hidden, perchance in this life, even from themselves. There must be lives of dimmed perception voluntarily assumed, because of certain work to be done. Those who hew straight to the line—*any* line which serves a common good—must be guided by an inner direction which is enough for them. Would we do as well, or as much, with only the wordless urgings of the spirit for our guide?

This is the season when the current of individual resolve may be renewed and strengthened at the fountain of our common spiritual life. Knowledge of the occult cycles of nature gives priceless opportunity to the student, and in this lies a clue to the responsibility of those who are Theosophists in name as well as in heart's aspiration. Duties are various, and we know well only our own—the making of Warriors for the restoration of the Theosophical Movement to its original lines. "Many thousands are needed, but as the body grows, it takes care of itself. The struggle will be fierce—as we face it, not knowing the outcome—but the struggle is for us, or we would not have it. We will take what comes, and will give all that we are and have to the common cause, knowing that we are not fighting for self but for all. More we cannot do, and less we may not do under the Law of Brotherhood."

THE ASTRAL BODY

loss of the Concept of the Astral Body Descartes

HISTORICAL STUDIES: I

The whole issue of the quarrel between the profane and the esoteric sciences depends upon the belief in, and demonstration of, the existence of an astral body within the physical, the former independent of the latter.—*The Secret Doctrine,* 1888.

THE idea of a *subtle* body as both the formative and the surviving principle of the physical has been ignored in scientific thought for nearly three hundred years. From the time of Descartes until the coming of H. P. Blavatsky, the relation between mind and matter remained an enigma to scientists and philosophers alike, and is today except in the case of students of Theosophy. The Cartesian philosophy may be held responsible for the difficulties which have arisen out of the rigid separation of mind and matter, for the French philosopher established in Western tradition the habit of complete disregard for the metaphysical and scientific explanations of the ancients. Descartes was also the father of the mechanical view of nature, attempting to explain the movements of all particles of matter, as of organic bodies, according to mechanical laws of motion. Animals he held to be mere automata, and while he suggested that in man the "vital spirits" mediate between the soul and the body, in a manner suggested somewhat by modern Behavioristic theory, the influence of Cartesianism shows how easily both soul and Deity were eliminated from his philosophy. The avowed materialist, Lamettrie, who traced his doctrines to Descartes, maintained that the latter's account of the "soul" had been included in his writings to give them the appearance of Catholic orthodoxy, and that it was quite superfluous.[1]

Only the more acute of the contemporaries of Descartes realized that his theory of the formation and motions of bodies led straight to materialism; it led, in fact, back to the "fortuitous concourse of atoms" of the ancients, and forward to the "dead matter" and "blind force" of the nineteenth century. After centuries of scholastic vagary, the precise laws of motion formulated by Galileo, Kepler and Newton were a welcome change. Here was something definite, something *demonstrable,* and the incapacity of these laws to give an adequate account of the phenomena of organic life was overlooked in the enthusiastic acceptance of mathematical exactitude. Quantitative measurement was thought to be the universal key to knowl-

[1] See F. A. Lange, *History of Materialism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925) I, pp. 241-9.

edge of nature. Of the philosophers of Newton's time, only the Cambridge Platonists recognized the necessity of an intermediate plastic principle in man and nature. The failure of physics to accept the ancient doctrine of the universal Ether gave birth to the ridiculous phrase, "action at a distance," to account for the phenomena of gravitational attraction. The failure of modern psychology to accept the doctrine of the Astral Body is a principal reason why that would-be science merits its recent condemnation by the late William McDougall. Psychology, he wrote, "remains a chaos of dogmas and opinions diametrically opposed, a jangle of discordant schools and sects; a field exploited by quacks and charlatans of every sort, preying on the ignorance of a deeply interested public which knows not which way to turn for authoritative guidance."[2]

While admitting the great value of the mechanical principle in understanding the motions of physical bodies, the Cambridge Platonists maintained the existence of the *Spirit of Nature*. According to Dr. Henry More, this Spirit is "an incorporeal substance, without sense, diffused through the whole universe, exercising *plastic power,* producing those phenomena which cannot be explained mechanically."[3] Prof. J. A. Stewart summarizes the doctrine as given in More's *Immortality of the Soul:*

> This plastic principle explains . . . the growth of plants and embryos, and the instincts of animals, such as the nest-building instinct of the birds, the cocoon-spinning instinct of silk-worms. The Soul of man partakes in this plastic principle, and by means of it constructs for herself a body terrestrial, ærial, æthereal (*i. e.,* celestial), according as the stage of her development has brought her into vital relation with the vehicle of earth, air, or æther. . . .
>
> The Soul, by means of her plastic power, moulds the vehicle—earth, air, or æther—to any form she pleases; but having been first habituated to the human shape in the terrestrial body, she naturally moulds the ærial and celestial vehicles to the same shape. That is why ghosts (in whom More is a firm believer), being the Souls of the departed in their ærial bodies, are easily recognized by their features, when they return to the scenes of their terrestrial life.[4]

But these ideas were not accepted by the "natural philosophers," as the scientists of More's day regarded themselves; or if accepted they were not permitted to intrude into the scientific writings of the time. Newton cautiously revealed his private opinion in correspond-

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[2] William McDougall, *World Chaos* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1931), p. 67.

[3] J. A. Stewart, *The Myths of Plato* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1905), p. 95. (See also *Isis Unveiled* I, pp. 205-6, 384-5, for other statements by More.)

[4] *Ibid.,* pp. 95-7.

ence, saying in a letter to Bentley, "It is inconceivable that inanimate brute matter should, without the mediation of something else *which is not material,* operate and affect other matter, without mutual contact, as it must do if gravitation, in the sense of Epicurus, be essental and inherent in it. . . . "[5] It would have been well if Newton had made a forceful declaration of this idea before the world, but, as H. P. B. remarks, "it is from that theory of Newton's of a universal void—*taught,* if not believed in by himself, — that dates the immense scorn now shown by modern for ancient physics."[6]

With respect to physics and biology, the metaphysics of Descartes established the principles later adopted by the mechanists and positivists of modern materialism. The modern forms of speculative idealism also have their foundation in the Cartesian philosophy, taking the axiom, *Cogito, ergo sum,* as the starting point of rational inquiry. Although Descartes exempted from logical analysis the moral and religious problems on which the Church was supposed to be the sole authority, this restriction was soon forgotten in the triumphant course of rationalism. The Cartesian method in philosophy was, in effect, a denial that there exists a body of knowledge possessed by some men—the kind of knowledge theosophists call "the accumulated Wisdom of the ages." The only experience men of the West had had with such a supposed "body of knowledge" was in their contact with the dogmatic theology and irrational revelation of Christianity. The reason which rightly condemned Christian revelation as an avenue to truth, wrongly supposed that the logical speculations of individuals are therefore the only possible source of knowledge. Thus Cartesianism mechanized the view of nature and intellectualized the view of truth. This is not to make of Descartes the "personal devil" of modern scientific materialism and of philosophic relativism, but rather to suggest the consequences of ideas which were a clear and brilliant articulation of the tendencies of his time. The immediate popularity gained by the Cartesian philosophy shows its functions in crystallizing and organizing the half-formed opinions of his contemporaries.

It is difficult for one educated solely in modern theories of physiology and psychology to realize how widespread was the idea of an inner, subtle body among the peoples of antiquity. The evidences of this belief are now embedded in learned volumes of anthropology, where they are disposed of as "animistic" superstitions. However, one has only to inspect such works as Tylor's *Primitive Culture* to

[5] *The Secret Doctrine* I, 490-1.

[6] *Ibid.*, 495.

see that the astral body, in one or another of its aspects, is justly said to be a universal conception. In the words of a recent writer: "Apart from the refinements of philosophers and theologians, we find the popular beliefs of all races and of all ages surprisingly alike. Wherever we turn—to Bantu Africa, to the Indians of North America, to the pages of Homer and Dante, or to the folklore of China and Italy and Scotland—everywhere we find the soul regarded as a kind of airy, filmy double of the body."[7] H. P. B. says, "It is shown in every ancient scripture and Cosmogony that man evolved primarily as a *luminous incorporeal form,* over which, like the molten brass round the clay model of the sculptor, the physical frame of his body was built by, through, and from, the lower forms and types of animal terrestrial life."[8]

The mythological literature of ancient Greece shows that at the very birth of modern civilization, the astral body was regarded as the mortal aspect of the soul. This conception passed naturally into the doctrines of the early Greek philosophers, who were well aware of the ease with which metaphysical conceptions are stated in mythological terms. Strabo said, "the first historians and philosophers of nature were writers of myths." Aristotle, while calling Thales the founder of the school of philosophy which inquires into the material cause of things, added, "some think that the ancients, who lived long before the present generation, and first framed accounts of the gods, held a similar view of nature." Plato showed the value of the myth as a vehicle for abstract truths, and it is evident that he saw the underlying unity of myth and philosophy.[9]

The Greek teachings respecting the soul and the body came from India. More than a century ago the orientalist, H. T. Colebrook, noted the similarity of teachings among the Greeks and Indians. Both, he observes, taught the doctrine of metempsychosis. "They agree, likewise, in distinguishing the sensitive material organ from the rational and conscious living soul, the Thumos and Phren of Pythagoras, — one existing with the body, the other immortal. Like the Hindoo, Pythagoras, with the Greek philosophers, assigned a subtle aerial clothing to the soul, apart from the corporeal part, and a grosser clothing to it when united to the body."[10] Colebrook remarks that inasmuch as "a greater degree of similarity exists

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[7] J. T. Addison, *Life Beyond Death* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933), p. 3.

[8] *S. D.* II, 112.

[9] W. A. Heidel, *The Heroic Age of Science* (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co., 1933), pp. 7-9.

[10] Quoted by E. Pococke, *India in Greece* (London: Griffin & Co., 1852), p. 363. (Compare *Key to Theosophy,* pp. 91-100, 115-16, orig. ed.)

between the Indian doctrine, and that of the earlier than the later Greeks," he is disposed to conclude that "the Indians were in this instance teachers rather than learners." Among modern authorities, this is the view of Gomperz and Macdonell.

The Homeric poems distinguish between the physical body and the *psyche* or astral soul. Upon the death of the body, the psyche speeds to Hades where it has a shadowy existence, "destitute even of the attribute of self-consciousness."[11] It is evident that this doctrine relates to the animal soul, or *Kama-Rupa.* The destiny of the higher soul, the reincarnating ego, was known to initiates of the Mystery Schools and taught in allegorical form by poets like Pindar and Empedocles, and by Plato in the dialogues and myths. Even in the exoteric and popular Homeric poems, there are hints of the true doctrine of immortality. In the eleventh book of the *Odyssey,* Odysseus tells Alcinoüs how he met the Shade of Heracles in Hades:

> . . . . the strength of Heracles
> I gazed on, a mere shadowy counterfeit
> (He, the true form, among the gods of ease,
> Wed to fair-ankled Hebe, still doth sit,
> Feasting). While round him the dead phantoms flit. . . .

The Heracles of the underworld was but the "shadow," the Shade, of the true Heracles who had become an immortal god on Olympus. Few Greeks, however, realized that the "Gods" were in one of their many meanings the highest aspect of human beings. This was the teaching of Plato. As Thomas Taylor explains in his Introduction to the *Timaeus,* "Every pure intellect is, according to the Platonic philosophy, a god, according to union; . . . even the souls of the most exalted men are gods according to similitude; while in the meantime super-essential natures only are primarily and properly gods."[12]

The great Neoplatonist, Plotinus, makes interesting use of this passage from the *Odyssey,* indicating its bearing on the question of immortality and the different kinds of memory. He shows that the Shade of Hercules in Hades has memory only of the events of earth-life, and is lacking in moral judgment. The Shade relates to Odysseus the woes of his great "Labors" undertaken on earth; but, Plotinus asks, What would the *other* Hercules say—the real man, or soul of Hercules, freed and separated from the image in Hades? Showing that the highest part of man's nature is uncon-

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[11] See Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* II, 769a fn.

[12] *Plato* (London: Benj. & John White, 1793), p. 376. (It should be noted that Taylor, according to H. P. B., was the only translator and commentator who correctly understood Plato's meaning. See THEOSOPHY V, 168.)

cerned with particular memories of earthly events—that, "even in our own world, indeed, it is a fine thing to release oneself from human pre-occupations"—Plotinus speaks of that state called the "Intelligible world," which is still higher than the heavenly regions (*Devachan*). "Hercules (in Heaven) may well vaunt his valor; but even this valor seems to him trifling when he has arrived at a region still holier than heaven, when he dwells in the intelligible world, when he has risen over Hercules himself by the force manifested in those struggles which are characteristic of veritable sages."[13]

The chief reason why modern translators have so much difficulty in understanding the ancients, and why Theosophists despair of really knowing the Greek philosophers except through H. P. B., is that scholars lack the profound knowledge of psychology such as Plotinus displays, and on which the teachings of the ancient initiates were based. One need only turn to the section of *The Key to Theosophy* where H. P. B. discusses the Greek teachings to appreciate this difficulty. Several Greek words, each capable of more than one meaning and interpretation, we translate by the single term, soul. The same difficulty is noted in the *Key* in the sub-section, "Definite Words for Definite Things." H. P. B. had to *create* her word-values as she went along, there being no counterparts for the subtleties of the ancient philosophy in English—the tongue of the unphilosophical, fighting, trading West. But our Greek scholars are not capable of so incarnating ancient wisdom in a modern tongue. By *psyche,* the Greeks meant the human soul, or lower Manas. This is rendered simply as "soul" in English—a wholly inadequate translation when left unqualified. As H. P. B. says: "By the word *soul,* neither Democritus nor the other philosophers understood the *nous* or *pneuma,* the divine *immaterial* soul, but the *psyche,* or astral body; that which Plato always terms the second mortal soul."[14] And "even Epicurus, the *model Atheist* and materialist, knew and believed so much in the ancient Wisdom that he taught that the Soul (entirely distinct from immortal Spirit when the former is enshrined *latent* in it, as it is in every atomic speck), was composed of a fine, tender essence, formed from the *smoothest, roundest,* and *finest atoms.*"[15] Not until Theosophy is understood in our modern universities will the spirit of Greek philosophy be grasped.

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[13] *Fourth Ennead,* Book III, 27-32. (Translation by Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, *Plotinus, Complete Works* [London: George Bell, 1918], pp. 433-40.)

[14] *Isis* I, 401 fn. [15] *S. D.* I, 568-9.

The doctrine of the astral soul is found in Plato principally in the myths. In the *Phaedrus* the soul is symbolized by a charioteer and his two winged horses harnessed together. Plato, H. B. P. explains, "represents the psychical nature as composite and twofold; the *thumos,* or epithumetic part, formed from the substance of the world of phenomena; and the *thumoeides,* the essence of which is linked to the eternal world."[16] The difference between the Gods and men lies in the fact that *both* the horses of the Gods are obedient to the dictates of the charioteer, while, with men, one of the animals is of "evil stock and himself evil." This horse represents "our more intimate *astral,* or inner man, who is but too often the evil genius of the embodied entity called man."[17] As Plato puts it:

> The Chariots of the Gods, going evenly and being always obedient to the hand of the Charioteer, accomplish their journey easily; but the other Chariots hardly, with great labour, for the Horse which is by nature froward is as a weight, and ever inclineth towards the Earth, and, except the Charioteer hath brought him into subjection, draweth the chariot down. Herein standeth the cause to the Soul of trouble and trial exceeding great and sore which are prepared for her.[18]

The astral body is also mentioned in the *Timaeus* myth, where Plato describes the work of the "God" (the Universal *Nous* or Mind[19]) in establishing the Universe, which is "One Living Creature, which hath in itself all living creatures mortal and immortal."

> Of those which are divine He himself is the Maker; but the creation of those which are mortal he appointed unto His own offspring, to be their work; and they following His example, when they had received of him the immortal principle of the Soul, thereafter fashioned round about her this mortal body, and gave it all unto her to be her vehicle; and, moreover, they constructed another kind of Soul, and put it also into the Body, to wit the Mortal Soul which hath in itself passions terrible, of necessity inherent—first, Pleasure, evil's best bait, then Pains that banish good things, also Confidence and Fear, two heedless counsellors, and Wrath hard to entreat, and Hope easily led astray. These did they mix with Sense that lacketh Reason, and Love that dareth all, and so builded the mortal kind of Soul.

Earlier in the *Timaeus* myth Plato says: "Out of that fire which hath not the power of burning, but is able to give gentle light—that light, to wit, which belongeth to day—they [the Gods] contrived and made a body; for the pure fire, twin-born therewith, which is in

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[16] *Isis* I, xii. [17] *S. D.* I, 639.
[18] This and the subsequent extracts from the myths are from Stewart's *Myths of Plato.*
[19] THEOSOPHY V, 110.

us they did cause to flow through the eyes. . . . " This body is called the "carriage" of the Head which, sphere-like, is the "divinest of our parts." Elsewhere he tells how the Demiurge forms souls of three qualities from the basic "soul-stuff" of the Universe, allotting to each soul a star as its "chariot." Toward the end of the myth Plato describes the respective natures of the three Souls in man: there is "the immortal principle of the Soul," the "Mortal Soul" of the passions, and the "Appetitive Soul" which is the organ of the instincts, and that through which we receive the Oracles of Dreams. This seems to be a threefold division of Manas, Kama, and the Astral body.

Plato's description in the *Gorgias* myth of the fate of the mortal soul is explained by H. P. B.:

> Socrates narrates to Callicles that this mortal soul retains all the characteristics of the body after the death of the latter; so much so, indeed, that a man marked with the whip will have his astral body "full of prints and scars." The astral spirit is a faithful duplicate of the body, both in a physical and a spiritual sense. The Divine, the highest and immortal spirit, can be neither punished nor rewarded. To maintain such a doctrine would be at the same time absurd and blasphemous, for it is not merely a flame lit at the central and inexhaustible fountain of light, but actually a portion of it, and of identical essence. It assures immortality to the individual astral being in proportion to the willingness of the latter to receive it.[20]

Modern Platonists err in their interpretation of the great Greek philosopher because of their tendency to take literally what he intended to be allegorical, and, conversely, because they usually regard as mere fables what to him were important truths. The Neoplatonists, like H. P. B., were initiates, and in their writings we find the true meaning of Plato's teaching. As H. P. B. said: "It is this hidden Pythagorean meaning in *Timaeus, Cratylus,* and *Parmenides,* and a few other trilogies and dialogues, that the Neoplatonists ventured to expound, as far as the theurgical vow of secrecy would allow them."[21] Thus Proclus, in his Commentaries on the *Timaeus,* objects to the view that Plato taught the transmigration of human souls into animal bodies, urging that it is impossible for the rational essence to become the soul of a savage animal. Similarly, Hierocles, an Alexandrian philosopher of the fifth century, wrote in his Commentaries on the Golden Verses of Pythagoras:

> He who expects that after his death he shall put on the body of a beast and become an animal without Reason, because of his vices, or

[20] *Isis* I, 327.

[21] *Ibid.,* 287; cf. xvii-viii.

a plant because of his dullness and stupidity, such a man, I say, acting quite contrary to those who transform the Essence of man into one of the superior Beings and precipitating it into one of the inferior substances, is infinitely deceived, and absolutely ignorant of the Essential Form of our soul, which can never change. Being and continuing always Man, it is only said to become God or beast by virtue or vice, for by its nature it cannot be either the one or the other, but only by its resemblance to the one or the other.[22]

Clearly, Plato's doctrine of transmigration, as H. P. B. says, applies to "the plastic material, astral soul," which, "following the laws of blind matter, shapes itself thoroughly into the mould which vice had been gradually preparing for it through the earth life of the individual." This explains the statements which seem to imply transmigration:

Then, as Plato says, it [the astral soul] assumes the form of that "animal to which it resembled in its evil ways" during life. "It is an ancient saying," he tells us, "that the souls departing hence exist in Hades and return hither again and *are produced from the dead* . . . but those who are found to have lived an eminently holy life, these are they who arrive at the pure abode ABOVE and DWELL ON THE UPPER PARTS of the earth" (the ethereal region).[23]

Elsewhere H. P. B. goes into greater detail to explain how the astral soul assumes an animal form:

. . . the semi-material Skandhas of the astral man (his very ego, up to the point of final purification) are appropriated to the evolution of minor astral forms (which, of course, enter into the purely physical bodies of animals) as fast as he throws them off in his progress to Nirvana . . . so long as the disembodied man is throwing off a single particle of these Skandhas, a portion of him is being reincarnated in the bodies of plants and animals.[24]

In the light of these clarifying statements, the doctrine of the astral body as found in the teachings of the ancient Greeks is plainly the same as that found in the modern presentation of the Wisdom-Religion.

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[22] Commentary on verses 52-3. [23] *Isis* I, 328.

[24] "Views of the Theosophists," an article published by the London *Spiritualist* in 1878 and reprinted in *A Modern Panarion* (p. 132).

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEATH AND REBIRTH

THE power to create is inherent in the soul. The soul itself knows no beginning nor ending, no birth nor death. The creations of the soul, be they human goals or aspirations, or the bodily instrument necessary for the expression of acquired attributes, must perish. Just as the limited physical habitation of any ego cannot furnish the field for acquirement of all experience on earth, so the merely human ideals of men chart but part of the course that every soul must eventually traverse. With some, the same ideals and aspirations will endure throughout an entire physical existence; for others partial ideals prove insufficient; they must experience intense suffering, watch long cherished values crumble, in order to gain a wider range of perception.

Can not men find true ideals, with which they will not be forced to part? Are not generosity, kindness, and unselfishness ideals which will never prove insufficient? To be sure, the perfection of these virtues would mean the perfection of all others, nor should they be absent from any ideal, however high; but for all too many, such qualities are mere abstractions—dim ideals toward which their motive and will direct them rarely, and even then in narrow range of application. Men may be kindly, generous and unselfish to members of their own household. They may feel that thus they fully exemplify the highest ideals of human conduct; but, when a man suddenly realizes that the world is not limited to the walls of his own home, that there are those beyond his intimate circle who need his kindness and generosity, it is clear that his ideals in their old form are disintegrating. The disintegration will be inevitably accompanied by pain, by a growing dissatisfaction with all that life previously offered by way of hopes and aspirations. Old ideas must perish before their rebirth in new and more universal forms.

All compounds are perishable, and human ideals are indeed compounds, composed of one indestructible element—the moral nature—and those evanescent elements which our feeling for the "good" selects according to personal tendency and affinity. When our most precious ideals lose their inspiration, dissolving in the face of a wider reality, we suffer a psychological death far more terrible than the tortures of Torquemada. Emotionally we experience the end of the world. The destructive forces in the school of experience have played their part, our dreams have vanished; yet even then it is possible to realize that we ourselves have the capacity for re-

creation; the same power that gathered together the elements for the first compound of aspirations can assemble better elements in a new compound.

We must accept the death of past hopes while we bring to birth new and more enduring ideals. But the task is not simple. It is far easier to identify ourselves with those shattered aspirations and allow ourselves, mentally and morally, to follow them into oblivion, than to create anew.

No ideal has meaning unless we have dedicated ourselves to its realization. Unless some end commands our energies and devotion, the life of man is meaningless, and evolution for him at a standstill. The taking of a vow to accomplish this or that precise and definite goal is a means of arousing the will, whether or no objectives are wisely chosen. Our own or others' weaknesses, however, may bar the way, and we may find ourselves seeking immediate realization of that which is presently impossible. Yet, the struggle against all possible odds has its value; no strengthening of the will is wasted, but must serve higher ends.

Envision a pledge taken by a man, not to this or that hoped-for result, but to a *principle,* to his own highest nature. What practical effect might such a vow produce? It will enable him to say time and time again, in the most crucial moments: "My universe has crumbled. I will build it again on wiser plans, and yet realize that even the new structure, too, may some day fall. I have encountered mental and psychic death, but I shall create for myself a new birth." When the will is thus invoked—when a man consciously assumes a new outlook, resolutely turning away from the past of lost hopes and longings—he has passed through psychological birth consciously. If he realizes that his new immediate goals can suffice only for a time, he can expect calmly the death of any save universal hopes—can pass consciously through psychological death.

When will man remember past *physical* lives and deaths? When he learns to note and explain the death of old ideals, old attitudes of mind, and is able to gain value from the instance of their passing. The separation of the various principles in man at the time of physical death bears close analogy to the separation of man from old modes of thinking. The evolution of the soul is a series of progressive awakenings. Old forms of ideas must be discarded, but even while they are falling away, leaving the soul in turmoil, their past usefulness should be considered. In the hour of death when the principles are near to separation, the soul has opportunity to reflect on every experience of even the most frustrated life.

Hence, the awakening on the physical plane, when the ego takes on a new body, need not mean projection into a dark hall of ignorance; the ego might bring with him past knowledge to lighten his way.

We may learn to pass through death consciously while here on earth. The death of every idea, human aspiration or mode of thought is the beginning of a new birth. All too often men succumb to the psychological "after-death states" of waking life, working over and over again old hopes and longings which can never be realized—they have been "outgrown."

Death, like birth, is an opportunity for soul vision, for at the moment of clairvoyance attending every physical disintegration the soul looks impartially on all the terrestrial experiences left behind. The vision comes to all, but those who have transcended the psychological deaths of everyday living are able to regain that vision at time of need in each new life. Is death itself but one of our progressive awakenings?

The key to the mysteries of death and rebirth is with us constantly, for we pass many times through the most terrible of psychic and mental deaths. Do we make the effort of will needed to pick up the shattered remains and construct consciously a better psychic and mental universe? If we do, we realize that all death, physical or otherwise, is but the opportunity for another "progressive awakening." Such an attitude and such a will can make of death and birth conscious processes.

THE BETTER AND THE DEARER

The better is one thing, the dearer is another thing; these two bind a man in opposite ways. Of these two, it is well for him who takes the better; he fails of his object, who chooses the dearer.

The better and the dearer approach a man; going around them, the sage discerns between them. The sage chooses the better rather than the dearer; the fool chooses the dearer, through lust of possession.

—*From the Upanishads.*

SOCIAL THEORIES AND IDEALS

MOST of us are given to approving or disapproving modern trends of thought, as they conform or fail to conform to our own ideas, prejudices and cherished opinions. We denounce or praise doctrines with such labels as Fascism, Communism, Capitalism or Socialism, and it is profitable, though not flattering, to note that our "behavior pattern" in neither case evidences a higher degree of intelligence than the tendency of one chemical substance to repel or to combine with another. The influential movements of the day, whether they be Fascism, Communism, Socialism or philosophical or religious panaceas, have not come into being through the will of either God or Devil, to be accordingly embraced or condemned. Each such movement represents a mass attitude of mind for which political and intellectual conditions have paved the way. Those very conditions, however, are the cumulative result of thought and action of all the people—not alone of "propagandists," "agitators" and "radicals."

Today serious thought inclines to socialism, chiefly because of the popular doctrine that economic maladjustment is responsible for modern social unrest. The solution, it is supposed, must be sought in a reformed economic system. The socialist objective to be gained by this means is a brotherhood of men without class distinction and a society of cooperative effort—a noble ideal which should be borne in mind by those inclined to condemn the movement entirely because of the class hatred and ambition for self exhibited by some socialists. The love for humanity which has inspired great socialists is in no way discredited by opportunists and self-seekers in the ranks. Genuine socialists are a constantly growing number of men and women finally awake to the miseries of mankind, and who long to alleviate them. The hope of humanity lies now, as always, with those in whom is kindled the fire of compassion.

Practical realization of the socialist ideal, however, must overcome many obstacles. To gain converts to the movement, leaders paint glowing pictures of the better standard of living for all. The masses respond with the natural desire to improve their lot, and, being told that the capitalistic system is fundamentally to blame, they soon subordinate the humanitarian ideal they have never fully understood to a bitter hatred for the ruling class. But the high ideal of betterment of all cannot be inculcated by emphasis on hate and blame. Followers as well as leaders must be inspired by a philos-

ophy which gives a rational basis for altruism. Social evils will simply reproduce themselves anew when there is no change of basic attitude and individual ideal.

Neglecting these considerations, the majority of social theorists contend that waves of crime and cycles of war will be ended only by a new economic order. Educational institutions, fast becoming impregnable strongholds of this view, give pre-eminence to economic subjects. Economic historians dominate the field of historical writing; professors of philosophy and ethics, desiring to be "practical," gear their subjects to the economic doctrine originally formulated by Karl Marx and in more moderate version by John Dewey. Students support educational emphasis on economics and expect an economic interpretation of history and even of philosophy. This popular faith in economic panaceas is logically correlated with the view that metaphysical thought is totally useless and unproductive. Religion is simply a fiction to preserve the *status quo,* and the hope for a transcendental foundation for ethics is mocked as a species of scholasticism. The modern contempt for metaphysics is typically expressed by Stuart Chase in a recent review of Dr. P. W. Bridgman's *The Intelligent Individual and Society:*

> Problems incapable of operational verification [says Mr. Chase] are meaningless or footless—"Is the universe boundless?" "What is the ultimate nature of matter?" These are splendid questions for a bull session in a college dormitory or in a hospital for the mentally unbalanced, but as they are not subject to experiment, no knowledge is gained by arguing about them. Physical facts cannot be proved by words. All words can do in the premises is to communicate the results of experiment. If there can be no experiment, there can be no proof. This is the medicine which intellectuals must learn to take if their able mental machinery is going to do them or the world any good.[1]

Mr. Chase has selected metaphysical questions which to him seem entirely abstract and remote, yet the very problems they call to mind are the ones that modern science is expected finally to solve. Medicine now faces the difficult task of determining the influence of man's psychic conditions upon the structure of his body. Is not the "ultimate nature of matter" here involved? How is matter affected by thought? Or, more specifically, why does worry cause peptic ulcers? The most important problem in both modern psychology and philosophy is that of causation—is mind the product of matter, or are matter and form the product of mind, as the idealists hold? If

[1] *Common Sense,* August, 1938.

efforts to answer these and similar questions are "meaningless," then so are medicine, sociology and psychology, for every step of progress in any of these sciences rises from an implicit theory as to the nature of matter.

Mr. Chase desires more "facts," yet there are already too many facts for any one man to assimilate and understand. More important than data are the principles by which we organize facts and assess their meaning. Men do not cease being philosophers while awaiting "facts," as Mr. Chase's own anti-metaphysical dogmas demonstrate. He shows a settled conviction as to the nature and limits of knowledge when he denies the value of metaphysics. He subscribes to the common "scientific" delusion that given enough facts they will somehow interpret themselves. He fails to see that human minds always give meaning to facts according to *some* metaphysical position, consciously or unconsciously assumed. And, strangely enough, certain opinions about the questions which Mr. Chase regards as "meaningless or footless" are directly responsible for the pattern of meaning he is disposed to find in his "facts."

Friedrich Engels, originator with Karl Marx of the Communist sociology, clearly described the predicament of scientists and thinkers like Mr. Chase who deride the value of philosophy.

> Scientists [writes Engels] imagine that they have freed themselves from philosophy, when they either ignore it or blame it. But since they cannot move a step without thought, and for thought it is necessary to have logical definitions, these definitions they borrow carelessly either from the current theoretical stock-in-trade of so-called "educated" people, who retain the last shreds of worn-out philosophic systems, or from the crumbs of a compulsory university course in philosophy. The latter tends to give a fragmentary point of view, and leads to the confusion of the opinions of people belonging to entirely different and for the most part worse schools. Or these definitions are derived from the uncritical and unsystematic reading of all kinds of philosophical writings—so that in the end the scientists find themselves bound fast to philosophy, but unfortunately, in the majority of cases, to the worst kind of philosophy. Those who blamed philosophy most heartily become most often slaves of the vulgarized remains of the worst philosophic systems.[2]

While dialectical materialism may be philosophically inadequate and incomplete, it is with Engels a position consciously taken. He sets an example that many Marxians would do well to follow, as

[2] Friedrich Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*. Translated from the Russian and cited by K. N. Kornilov of the Moscow State University. In *Psychologies of 1930*, edited by Carl Murchison (Clark University Press, 1930), pp. 244-5.

well as other social theorists who accept pseudo-scientific opinion. For all scientific theory, especially social theory, is founded on metaphysics. Failure to realize this accounts for the growing rigidity of scientific dogma and the denial of all other philosophy. Science, without a philosophical basis of self-criticism, becomes mere assertion. As the Soviet psychologist, K. N. Kornilov, has said: "Since pure empiricism does not satisfy any one of the sciences, and sooner or later it becomes necessary to turn to theoretical generalizations, the philosophic analysis of fundamental conceptions on which the given science works becomes a matter of necessity."

This awareness of the importance of philosophy is a hopeful sign; it means that even dialectical materialists may begin to appreciate criticism of their own basic assumptions. Everyone is a metaphysician in that he has a philosophy of life, the pattern of meaning into which he places facts. Realization of this truth would cause men to be deliberate in choosing their codes of conduct, instead of absorbing like a sponge the various and conflicting ideas of the race mind—the psychic and intellectual environment.

Opposition to education in metaphysical principles comes from those who wish to avoid mere "theory." Prof. Joseph A. Leighton, author of the recent university text, *Social Philosophies in Conflict*, earnestly seeks a practical means of social reconstruction, while mirroring the conventional distrust of metaphysics:

> We are not concerned here with metaphysics [he writes], not even in detail with the meeting-points of ethics and metaphysics. They do meet in the theory of personality: the question of freedom and the question of the place of human values or personality in the universe. But our aim in this work is practical and we can confine ourselves to ethics.

Elsewhere Prof. Leighton speaks of "two possible ways of escape" from economic and social problems. The first is through a reform in attitude and philosophy, which might enable capitalism to survive. This, he says, would involve voluntary curtailment of profits up to three per cent, according to estimates of the Brookings Institute. But Prof. Leighton sees little chance that industry will adopt such a humanitarian program of self-reform, which leaves the alternative of "the socialization of the means of production and distribution of those consumer's goods necessary to a decent and full life," to be accomplished, presumably, through the spread of socialist doctrine.

While wholly sympathetic with the underlying motives and ideals of socialism, Theosophists maintain that reform must first be

achieved internally through dissemination of a humanitarian philosophy of life. They feel that it is not presumptuous to demand in their turn an "operational verification" of the theories of socialism. What, in short, has been the history of socialistic experiments?

The word "socialism" first came into common usage through the work of Robert Owen in England and Fourier and Saint-Simon in France during the early years of the nineteenth century. A successful manager of textile mills, Owen in 1814 established a modified socialist community, the members of which operated the New Lanark mills. In 1824 he came to America and founded a colony in Indiana called "New Harmony," which was to be a practical fulfillment of his social theories. This project, however, was a signal failure. His sons, who had participated in the venture, described it as "a bold but premature experiment to ascertain whether a mixed and unassorted population could successfully govern their own affairs," and Owen himself attributed the breakdown of the plan to "habits of the individual system." A similar failure attended the famous Brook Farm project founded in New England by Ripley in 1840. Despite an early success and the participation and interest of several of the most noted of the Transcendentalists, Brook Farm succumbed to frictional storms. Its decline accelerated during an attempt to remodel the community according to the plan of Fourier, and after a bad fire the association was dissolved in 1847.

Instances of the failure of communistic experiments could be multiplied indefinitely. John Humphrey Noyes, founder of the Oneida Community in New York, lists forty-seven such failures in his *History of American Socialism.* He believed the most conspicuous failures were due to a lack of religious or spiritual unity rather than inferior organization or management. This was also the opinion of Horace Greeley, who had followed the Brook Farm experiment with interest. Charles Nordhoff, author of *Communistic Societies of the United States,* likewise concluded, "Religion must be the foundation of every human society which is to be orderly, virtuous, and therefore self-denying," adding the important qualification that "if it is meant that in order to succeed there must be some peculiar religious faith, fanatically held, I do not believe it at all."

History supports Mr. Nordhoff's judgment. Communistic societies with only humanistic and utilitarian principles for their ethical basis have either disintegrated or lapsed into the familiar forms where private gain is the impelling motive. The only successful

communities in which the principle of unselfish sharing has been maintained for any considerable period have been those embodying a religious or spiritual ideal. Outstanding witness to this truth in relatively modern times is the religious body of Shakers, established near Albany, N. Y., about 1780. Devout followers of an undogmatic pantheism blended with Christian doctrines, the Shakers maintained an ascetic order of communal life for about 150 years. Believers in absolute celibacy, the Shakers were augmented by conversion, at one time numbering nearly five thousand members living in settlements distributed throughout the eastern States. Today they have practically disappeared, due, however, not to any dissension or failure in realizing the communistic ideal, but to lack of converts, the older members dying off.

A careful comparison of the two types of communistic endeavor —one animated by motives of economic justice and plenty; the other, in which these aspects of communism are subordinated to a higher or spiritual ideal—would show that the first inevitably tends to fail, the latter to succeed. While initial enthusiasm may sustain an economic experiment for a time, the old selfish tendencies soon assert themselves. There is no compelling basis for self-denial in promises of mere material betterment. Religious communities are in one sense far more "rational" than those established on a "scientific" basis, for their very conviction forms a ground for united effort, a *reason* for practical altruism.

Socialist writers habitually cite the example of the early Greek city-states to illustrate the possibilities in strong centralization of government. While the Greeks had never heard of the "class struggle," their many community activities were an application of socialist principles. But those who seek support for economic socialism in the experience of ancient Greece forget in the fire of their enthusiasm the *inner unity* of the Hellenes. Greece was originally of one religion, the religion of ancient Egypt and India, transmitted to historical times by the Mystery Schools. In this *Pagan Regeneration,* Harold Willoughby recognizes in the Mysteries the foundation for the social structure.

> In the *polis* of Hellenic days [he says], political, moral and religious duties were all integrated. The Orphic teachings regarding immortality . . . were taken up by the Pythagoreans and moralized by Pindar and rationalized by Plato.

The practical results of a social philosophy based on reincarnation and karma, known even to the masses, although in distorted form, shows why H. P. Blavatsky placed so much emphasis upon

these fundamental ethical doctrines. They have always presented the only *rational* basis for the ideal of the common good.

When humanitarian reformers of modern times have instituted practical programs ostensibly founded on economic theory, difficulties have arisen because the surge of altruism necessary to real cooperation inspired only the few. These reformers were not philosophers but philanthropists, men whose lives transcended by far their so-called principles; hence, their ethics were devoid of rational support and difficult of transmission to others. Meantime, because of the hypocrisy of organized Christianity, expounders of ethical doctrines have come to distrust not only religion, but also the whole field of metaphysics, which they connect with theology. They will not look to metaphysics, the science of real values, to find a common purpose and goal for all. Yet experience shows that purely economic and material inducements as a basis for cooperation can awaken only economic and material motives, except in those cases where unconsciously held spiritual values set the ideals for achievement.

In the light of these considerations, are liberals, progressives and socialists to be condemned or praised? Neither of these reactions shows an appreciation of causes behind the vast movement toward freedom which finds expression in these and many other points of view. All men can learn and be inspired by the ardor of sincere socialists who desire to lift material burdens from the shoulders of humanity. But without the key Theosophy provides, their dreamed-for success is impossible. A new attitude towards the role of metaphysics must reflect itself throughout our intellectual and educational worlds, for real metaphysics, real philosophy, can lead in but one direction—to appreciation of the part which each individual plays in an ever unfolding scheme of evolution, an evolution of enduring souls. It is only when men have learned the importance of their attitude toward life and have learned to select their values, that voluntary self-denial will ensue. Self-denial is *the* essential of cooperation—in family, nation or race. Meanwhile, the very struggles of reformers may lead them to deeper insight, to perception of a bond beyond the physical and economic which unites them in destiny with their fellow men.

KOSMIC MIND

II

AMONG hundreds of accusations against Asiatic nations of degrading *superstitions,* based on "crass ignorance," there exists no more serious denunciation than that which accuses and convicts them of personifying and *even deifying* the chief organs *of,* and *in,* the human body. Indeed, do not we hear these "benighted fools" of Hindus speaking of the small-pox as a goddess —thus personifying the microbes of the variolic virus? Do we not read about *Tantrikas,* a sect of mystics, giving proper names to nerves, cells and arteries, connecting and identifying various parts of the body with deities, endowing functions and physiological processes with intelligence, and what not? The vertebrae, fibres, ganglia, the cord, etc., of the spinal column; the heart, its four chambers, auricle and ventricle, valves and the rest; stomach, liver, lungs and spleen, everything has its special deific name, is believed *to act consciously* and to act under the potent will of the Yogi, whose head and heart are the seats of Brahmâ and the various parts of whose body are all the pleasure grounds of this or another deity!

This is indeed *ignorance.* Especially when we think that the said organs, and the whole body of man are composed of cells, and these cells are now being recognized as individual organisms and—*quien sabe*—will come perhaps to be recognized some day as *an independent race of thinkers* inhabiting the globe, called man! It really looks like it. For was it not hitherto believed that all the phenomena of assimilation and sucking in of food by the intestinal canal, could be explained by the laws of diffusion and endosmosis? And now, alas, physiologists have come to learn that the action of the intestinal canal during the act of absorbing, is not identical with the action of the non-living membrane in the dialyser. It is now well demonstrated that—

> "This wall is covered with epithelium cells, each of which is an organism *per se,* a living being, and with very complex functions. We know further, that such a cell assimilates food—by means of active contractions of its protoplasmic body—in a manner as mysterious as that which we notice in the independent Amoeba and animalcules. We can observe on the intestinal epithelium of the cold-blooded animals how these cells project shoots—*pseudopodiae*—out

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NOTE—This article, Part I of which appeared last month, was first printed by H. P. Blavatsky in *Lucifer* for April, 1890.—Eds.

of their contractive, bare, protoplasmic bodies—which pseudopodiae, or false feet, fish out of the food drops of fat, suck them into their protoplasm and send it further, toward the lymph-duct. . . . The lymphatic cells issuing from the nests of the adipose tissue, and squeezing themselves through the epithelium cells up to the surface of the intestines, absorb therein the drops of fat and loaded with their prey, travel homeward to the lymphatic canals. So long as this active work of the cells remained unknown to us, the fact that while the globules of fat penetrated through the walls of the intestines into lymphatic channels, the smallest of pigmental grains introduced into the intestines did not do so, — remained unexplained. But today we know, that this faculty of selecting their special food—of assimilating the useful and rejecting the useless and the harmful—is common to all the unicellular organisms."*

And the lecturer queries, why, if this *discrimination* in the selection of food exists in the simplest and most elementary of the cells, in the formless and structureless protoplasmic *drops*—why it should not exist also in the epithelium cells of our intestinal canal. Indeed, if the *Vampyrella* recognizes its much beloved *Spirogyra,* among hundreds of other plants as shown above, why should not the epithelium cell, *sense, choose* and *select* its favorite drop of fat from a pigmental grain? But we will be told that "sensing, choosing, and selecting" pertain only to reasoning beings, at least to the *instinct* of more structural animals than is the protoplasmic cell outside or inside man. Agreed; but as we translate from the lecture of a learned physiologist and the works of other learned naturalists, we can only say, that these learned gentlemen must know what they are talking about; though they are probably ignorant of the fact that their *scientific* prose is but one degree removed from the *ignorant,* superstitious, but rather poetical "twaddle" of the Hindu Yogis and Tantrikas.

Anyhow, our professor of physiology falls foul of the materialistic theories of diffusion and endosmosis. Armed with the facts of the evident discrimination and *a mind* in the cells, he demonstrates by numerous instances the fallacy of trying to explain certain physiological processes by mechanical theories; such for instance as the passing of sugar from the liver (where it is transformed into glucose) into the blood. Physiologists find great difficulty in explaining this process, and *regard it as an impossibility to bring it under the endosmosic laws.* In all probability the lymphatic cells play just as active a part during the absorption of alimentary sub-

* From the paper read by the Professor of physiology at the University of Basle, previously quoted.

stances dissolved in water, as the peptics do, a process well demonstrated by F. Hofmeister.* Generally speaking, poor convenient endosmose is dethroned and exiled from among the active functionaries of the human body as a useless sinecurist. It has lost its voice in the matter of glands and other agents of secretion, in the action of which the same epithelium cells have replaced it. The mysterious faculties of selection, of extracting from the blood one kind of substance and rejecting another, of transforming the former by means of decomposition and synthesis, of directing some of the products into passages which will throw them out of the body and redirecting others into the lymphatic and blood vessels—such is the work of the cells. "It *is evident that in all this there is not the slightest hint at diffusion or endosmose,*" says the Basle physiologist. "*It becomes entirely useless to* try and explain these phenomena by chemical laws."

But perhaps physiology is luckier in some other department? Failing in the laws of alimentation, it may have found some consolation for its mechanical theories in the question of the activity of muscles and nerves, which it sought to explain by electric laws? Alas, save in a few fishes—in no other living organisms, least of all in the human body, could it find any possibility of pointing out electric currents as the chief ruling agency. Electrobiology on the lines of pure dynamic electricity has egregiously failed. Ignorant of "Fohat" no electrical currents suffice to explain to it either muscular or nervous activity!

But there is such a thing as the physiology of external sensations. Here we are no longer on *terra incognita,* and all such phenomena have already found purely *physical* explanations. No doubt, there is the phenomenon of sight, the eye with its optical apparatus, its camera obscura. But the fact of the sameness of the reproduction of things in the eye, according to the same laws of refraction as on the plate of a photographic machine, is *no vital phenomenon.* The same may be reproduced *on a dead eye.* The phenomenon of life consists *in the evolution and development of the eye itself.* How is this marvelous and complicated work produced? To this physiology replies, "We do not know"; for, toward the solution of this great problem—

> "Physiology has not yet made one single step. True, we can follow the sequence of the stages of the development and formation of the eye, but *why* it is so and *what* is the causal connection, we have absolutely no idea. The second vital phenomenon of the eye is its

* *Untersuchungen uber Resorption u. Assimilation der Nahrstoffe* (Archiv f. Experimentalle Pathologie und Pharmakologie, Bd. XIX, 1885).

accommodating activity. And here we are again face to face with the functions of nerves and muscles—our old insoluble riddles. The same may be said of all the organs of sense. The same also relates to other departments of physiology. We had hoped to explain the phenomena of the circulation of the blood by the laws of hydrostatics or hydrodynamics. Of course the blood moves in accordance with the hydrodynamical laws; but its relation to them remains utterly *passive*. As to the *active* functions of the heart and the muscles of its vessels, *no one, so far, has ever been able to explain them by physical law.*"

The underlined words in the concluding portion of the able Professor's lecture are worthy of an Occultist. Indeed, he seems to be repeating an aphorism from the "Elementary Instructions" of the esoteric physiology of *practical* Occultism:—

"*The riddle of life is found in the active functions of a living organism,* the real perception of which activity we can get only through self-observation, and not owing to our external senses;* by observations on our will, so far as it penetrates our consciousness, thus revealing itself to our inner sense. Therefore, when the same phenomenon acts only on our external senses, we recognize it no longer. We see everything that takes place around and near the phenomenon of motion, but the essence of that phenomenon we do not see at all, because we lack for it a special organ of receptivity. We can accept that *esse* in a mere hypothetical way, and do so, in fact, when we speak of 'active functions.' Thus does every physiologist, for he cannot go on without such hypothesis; and this is a first experiment of a *psychological explanation* of all *vital* phenomena. . . . And if it is demonstrated to us that we are unable with the help only of physics and chemistry to explain the phenomena of life, what may we expect from other adjuncts of physiology, from the sciences of morphology, anatomy, and histology? I maintain that these can never help us to unriddle the problem of any of the mysterious phenomena of life. For, after we have succeeded with the help of scalpel and microscope in dividing the organisms into their most elementary compounds, and reached the simplest of cells, it is just here that we find ourselves face to face with the greatest problem of all. The simplest monad, a microscopical point of protoplasm, formless and structureless, exhibits yet all the essential vital functions, alimentations, growth, breeding, motion, feeling and sensuous perception, and even such functions which replace 'consciousness'—the soul of the higher animals!"

* *Life and activity* are but different names for the same idea, or, what is still more correct, they are two words with which the men of science connect no definite idea whatever. Nevertheless, and perhaps just for that, they are obliged to use them, for they contain the point of contact between the most difficult problems over which, in fact, the greatest thinkers of the materialistic school have ever tripped.

The problem—for Materialism—is a terrible one, indeed! Shall our cells, and infinitesimal monads in nature, do for us that which the arguments of the greatest Pantheistic philosophers have hitherto failed to do? Let us hope so. And if they do, then the "superstitious and ignorant" Eastern Yogis, and even their exoteric followers, will find themselves vindicated. For we hear from the same physiologist that—

> "A large number of poisons are prevented by the epithelium *cells* from penetrating into lymphatic spaces, though we know that they are easily decomposed in the abdominal and intestinal juices. More than this, Physiology is aware that by injecting these poisons directly into the blood, they will separate from, and reappear through the intestinal walls, and that in this process the *lymphatic cells* take a most active part."

If the reader turns to Webster's *Dictionary* he will find therein a curious explanation at the words "lymphatic" and "Lymph." Etymologists think that the Latin word *lympha* is derived from the Greek *nympha,* "a nymph or *inferior Goddess,*" they say. "The Muses were sometimes called *nymphs* by the poets. Hence (according to Webster) all persons in a state of rapture, as seers, poets, madmen, etc., were said to be caught by the nymphs."

The Goddess of Moisture (the Greek and Latin *nymph* or *lymph,* then) is fabled in India as being born from the *pores* of one of the Gods, whether the Ocean God, Varuna, or a minor "River God" is left to the particular sect and fancy of the believers. But the main question is, that the ancient Greeks and Latins are thus admittedly known to have shared in the same "superstitions" as the Hindus. This superstition is shown in their maintaining to this day that every atom of matter in the four (or five) Elements is an emanation from an inferior God or Goddess, himself or herself an earlier emanation from a superior deity; and, moreover, that each of these atoms—being Brahmâ, one of whose names is *Anu,* or atom—no sooner is it emanated than it *becomes endowed with consciousness,* each of its kind, and free-will, acting within the limits of law. Now, he who knows that the *kosmic trimurti* (trinity) composed of Brahmâ, the Creator; Vishnu, the Preserver; and Siva, the Destroyer, is a most magnificent and scientific symbol of the *material* Universe and its gradual evolution; and who finds a proof of this, in the etymology of the names of these deities,* *plus* the doctrines

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* *Brahma* comes from the root *brih,* "to expand, to scatter"; *Vishnu* from the root *vis* or *vish* (phonetically) "to enter, to pervade" the universe, of matter. As to Siva—the patron of the Yogis, the etymology of his name would remain *incomprehensible* to the casual reader.

of *Gupta Vidya,* or esoteric knowledge—knows also how to correctly understand this "superstition." The five fundamental titles of Vishnu—added to that of *Anu* (atom) common to all the trimurtic personages—which are, *Bhutâtman,* one with the created or emanated materials of the world; *Pradhanâtman,* "one with the senses"; *Paramâtman,* "Supreme Soul"; and *Atman,* Kosmic Soul, or the Universal Mind—show sufficiently what the ancient Hindus meant by endowing with mind and consciousness every atom and giving it a distinct name of a God or a Goddess. Place their Pantheon, composed of 30 crores (or 300 millions) of deities within the macrocosm (the Universe), or inside the microcosm (man), and the number will not be found overrated, since they relate to the atoms, cells, and molecules of everything that is.

This, no doubt, is too poetical and abstruse for our generation, but it seems decidedly as scientific, if not more so, than the teachings derived from the latest discoveries of *Physiology* and *Natural History.*

Organic Life

There is one error which is commonly made, than which there can be no greater error in the views of an occultist. A division is made between what you call animate and inanimate objects, as if there could be such a thing as a perfectly inanimate object on earth! In reality, even that which you call a dead man is more alive than ever. From one point of view, the distinguishing mark between what is called the organic and the inorganic is the function of nutrition, but if there were no nutrition how could these bodies which are called inorganic undergo change? Even crystals undergo a process of accretion, which for them answers the function of nutrition. In reality, as Occult philosophy teaches us, everything which changes is organic; it has the life principle in it, and it has all the potentialities of the higher lives. If, as we say, all in nature is an aspect of the one element, and life is universal, how can there be such a thing as an inorganic atom! —H. P. Blavatsky.

YOUTH-COMPANIONS' FORUM

IS *not thought infinite in its variety of expression? If so, is it correct to say "There is nothing new under the sun?"*

(*a*) According to *The Friendly Philosopher:*

> When we consider the idea of thought we must remember that there cannot be thought without a thinker. There are no thoughts that arise of themselves; they are all produced by intelligent beings, no matter what kind of thoughts they are (p. 338).

We, then, are essentially the "power to think," which is another way of saying that we are Life itself. As Life is infinite, the capacity for thought is infinite. There is no stoppage to evolution; in an infinite universe there are infinite possibilities.

The saying that there is nothing new under the sun occurs in the Bible, in *Ecclesiastes* 1:19, which is attributed to Solomon. In the light of Theosophy, it appears as a statement of the law of Karma: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun." This is surely another way of saying that Karma is effect flowing from cause, action and reaction, the exact result for every thought and act. The reactions that come to us are a continuation of previous actions; they do not stand of themselves, and are not "new," so that, "there is no new thing under the sun."

(*b*) This question evidently involves the difference between principles and their applications. The principle of the lever, for example, never changes, but its employment is never exactly duplicated in a world of incessant change. While thoughts are of infinite variety, the principle of thinking, of conscious deliberation, is the same in every man and in all ages. The same comparision may be applied to the world of forms. "It is but natural," H. P. B. wrote in *Isis Unveiled,* "to think that each genus, beginning with the mollusks and ending with monkey-man, has modified from its own primordial and distinctive form." (I, 153.) These primordial and distinctive forms are eternal and changeless on ideal planes, but undergo endless modifications of development in manifested life. Hermes Trismegistus says: "Having been endowed with the germs of becoming, matter (objective) is brought into birth, for the creative force fashions it *according to the ideal forms.*" H. P. B. explains:

> Everything that *is, was,* and *will be,* eternally is, even the countless forms, which are finite and perishable only in their objective, not in their *ideal* Form. They existed as Ideas, in the Eternity, and, when they pass away, will exist as reflections. Neither the form of man, nor that of any animal, plant or stone has ever been *created,* and it

> is only on this plane of ours that it commenced "becoming," *i. e.*, objectivising into its materiality, or expanding *from within outwards,* from the most sublimated and supersensuous essence into its grossest appearance. . . . Occultism teaches that no form can be given to anything, either by nature or by man, whose ideal type does not already exist on the subjective plane. More than this; that no such form or shape can possibly enter man's consciousness, or evolve in his imagination, which does not exist in prototype, at least as an approximation. (*S. D.* I, 282.)

Every possible form exists potentially in the Universal Mind, just as every conceivable combination of numbers has a potential existence in Number. In time, all is new; out of time, nothing is new.

It is general for people to invite one to take some form of alcoholic drink. Should one separate himself from others by taking a stand against liquor?

(*a*) Jesus said, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate." He meant that we should never fear to make up our own minds concerning prevalent evils, and, acting in accordance with our convictions, thus separate ourselves from those evils. It goes without saying that we must express our ideas tactfully, but we should never hesitate to give the right ideas if opportunity presents. The theosophist does not "separate" himself from common-sense people, but only from "sensation-loving" addicts of drink. According to a standard medical authority, Rosenau's *Preventive Medicine and Hygiene:*

> The student of preventive medicine still regards the alcohol question as a public health problem. Alcohol is a habit-forming drug; it lowers resistence and shortens life, impairs efficiency, promotes poverty, increases crime, favors accidents, excites passions and diminishes self-control; it leads to immorality and tempts venereal infections. Alcohol increases economic waste and retards social progress. It is a narcotic rather than a stimulant. Its nutritional value is strictly limited. Its habitual use as an aid to work is physiologically unsound. Its local irritating action and its toxic effects upon nerve tissue account for a certain amount of harm; but the greatest harm perhaps results from the fact that alcohol, even in small amounts, clouds judgment, depresses willpower, and takes the check off self-restraint. In short, it stupefies the highest and noblest function of the mind.

Widespread drinking has had a terrible effect on parents, which reflects itself in their treatment of children. Young people, too, are all too often given to drinking. The efficiency of office and factory workers is greatly impaired by frequent drinking and the consequent "morning-afters." Moderate drinking usually leads to more

indulgence, but even in small amounts alcohol is harmful. Alcohol in any amount temporarily separates the lower from the Higher man. Theosophy teaches that the lower must be united with the Higher. Thus it is apparent why a theosophist would not compromise on such an important question, but would rather bring the facts to light, taking a stand against the misuse of alcohol, and be prepared to accept the consequences.

The theosophist is never "against" any *thing,* but only against its abuse; alcohol itself has many good uses. But if an attempt to point out the evils of alcohol is obviously inappropriate, because it could do no good, or even arouse bitter antagonism, the theosophist has only to refuse to drink in a manner which will attract as little attention as possible to himself. Various ways of meeting this problem are available. Drinks are refused by many who simply don't "like" alcohol. This is certainly true of the student, to put it mildly, although the reason offered is hardly the basic cause of abstention. He does not like alcohol, in the sense of an inner revulsion, because he knows what it does to human beings. Some say that drinking is against the "Doctor's orders," the Doctor in this case being the teaching of Theosophy—Physician of the Soul. Most medical authorities agree, also, that alcohol is not good for the body. One should reveal one's principles whenever he thinks their statement will be helpful to others, or whenever silence means compromise.

(*b*) Today the habit of drinking is indulged in by all classes. Socially, it is the "smart" thing to do. Meanwhile alcoholism has become a nation-wide problem. According to the National Committee on Mental Hygiene, "between the years 1920 and 1934 first [hospital] admissions for alcoholics in some metropolitan districts increased as much as 700 per cent." This state of affairs is a sad commentary on the prevailing standard of values, sense of responsibility, and self-control among the vast majority of people.

Theosophy, orientating man in relation to nature and demonstrating his individual responsibility toward all life and all beings, provides a rational basis for ethics and morality. It shows that man is a seven-principled being, intimately connected and interdependent with all nature. These principles are subject to division into the three higher, which compose the immortal, spiritual man, and the four lower, comprising the mortal animal man. The purpose of man's incarnation is two-fold: to give an upward impulse to all of the lower kingdoms by means of right thought, will, and feeling;

and to gain for himself conscious immortality through experience in matter.

The use of alcohol in any degree strengthens the animal man at the expense of the divine, thus tending to separate the mortal nature from the immortal. With the weakening of the link with the higher nature, there is a consequent and concurrent stoppage of the spiritual powers of intuition, discrimination, and sense of responsibility. The loss of spiritual powers means finally the loss of *all.*

The consequences of indulgence are not confined to the drinker himself, but flow to all beings by virtue of their common spiritual identity and interdependence. The lives making up his principles are used by all men in common, and others will feel the degrading tendency of those lives and in turn will be so influenced. These lives also find their way into the lower kingdoms and carry their burden of evil with them.

Thus, the individual who indulges in alcohol defeats the very purposes for which he incarnated. His animal nature instead of being raised, is given over to excesses, adding also to the bestial character of the lower kingdoms instead of aiding them toward a higher state of consciousness. Such an individual rejects his divine responsibility.

When a person takes a firm stand for right action he becomes a center of constructive force, both for himself and for others. The problem of refusing or accepting some form of alcoholic drink reflects the eternal battle between the forces of evil and the divine forces in nature—a contest in which there can be no compromise. In *The Voice of the Silence* it is stated that "The Self of Matter and the Self of Spirit can never meet. One of the twain must disappear; there is no place for both." The question is not whether one should separate himself from others, but whether by that choice, he is allying himself with the beneficent in nature, with his own Higher Self, with the Masters of Wisdom, or placing himself in league with evil forces.

A stand against liquor does not necessarily mean that one becomes entirely "separate" from those who take alcoholic drinks, but it does mean that one must separate himself from that part of the nature of others which leads them to drink. A polite refusal should never give offense, and if this is not effective, what difference does it make if one does lose such friends?

AN AGE-OLD QUESTION

THE question, "Has life a purpose?" has been asked for endless ages. It is one of those fundamental issues which everyone faces at some time. Yet since the reign of dogmatic theology in the western world, this problem and its related issues have been misconceived. Often those who hold that life *has* a purpose, think of life and purpose as separate—the purpose a course planned by some outside "Creator." Thus the beings who follow the planned course can have no purpose of their own—they are merely irresponsible agents fulfilling the purpose of their "Creator."

Now, even in the lower orders of nature, is plainly seen a direction *by instinct* to the fulfillment of certain purposes. Every human being consciously directs his energies towards the attainment of a goal, and though few conceive the goal as the same, all human activity is purposeful. Modern thought, recognizing this, speaks of *purposes,* conceived differently by each. Both views, the one representing the theological doctrine of *God's* purpose, the other the selfish cross-purposes of materialism, are but half-truths. A higher synthesis is needed—one that will show the path which all are travelling to be the same and yet one that each must travel in his own way.

Life, or the indwelling intelligence in every form, is essentially the capacity to grow, to expand the use of its powers. Must not, then, the one purpose universal to all life be inherent within life itself? All that we know of purpose is learned from the study of manifesting intelligence—our own and that of others. But if real purpose exists within ourselves, and on a higher plane of being than that of physical existence, why are we—spiritually, beings of *one* purpose—now living in material bodies and conceiving all manner of *purposes* as worthy of our pursuit?

Consideration of such a question makes apparent the importance of the Theosophical teaching concerning the seven principles of man. His first principle is the highest essence common to all—*the power to unfold.* The highest plane, then, is the plane of unity. Coming down the ladder toward the physical, there is the plane of soul-knowledge, which serves as the connection or bridge between the plane of unity and manifested world of mind. The mind plane has two aspects: first the higher mind, which serves as the translator of soul-vision into the language of intellect; second, lower mind, the antaskarana or necessary bridge of personality, which mirrors to the Perceiver impressions gained through the so-called "lower"

principles of man and nature. Any one of these reflections, however, may become so absorbing as to form a self-enclosed world of its own. We can exist in such a distorted world, oblivious of all else, having the perspective of but one plane, mirroring only reflections of the rest of nature; or, we can see such a plane for the limited field that it is, and benefit by its reflections while yet looking beyond them.

We also live in our emotional or psychic natures and in the world of physical sensations. Once again, these are planes to be understood, not abodes of pleasant forgetfulness. Why are we thus "burdened" with these complex constituents of our being, any one of which can become our permanent habitation through self-confusion?

Consider for a moment our physical bodies. They represent a collection of lives and intelligences peculiarly adapted to fulfill certain functions. Through our ability to exist on and yet perceive the nature of any plane of our being, we contact these lives and impress them with habits or tendencies which represent our own perspective. That perspective is determined by the use we make of our various modes of perception. Incarnation in matter simply means making contact with lesser intelligences *conscious on their own plane,* but not on ours. Since all intelligence is one in the power to perceive, we are not and cannot be divorced from that which is of the same essential nature as ourselves. When we "take on" a physical and emotional nature, we acquire the necessary instruments of interaction between the intelligence on those planes and ourselves.

There are intelligences below us in the present order of nature. One great class we speak of as animals, whose highest plane of existence is psychic. When we enter on that plane, the life of feeling, we contact and influence all beings possessing a psychic nature. Our existence through the psychic nature may be either conscious—when we perceive our feelings and emotions as such—or unconscious, when we live in and are absorbed by them. In the latter case we personify evolution in reverse, for we become an intelligence limited to only one plane, when we should be able to exist consciously on all. Through such misleading absorption we are unable to raise ourselves from that state and are likewise unable to help intelligences on that plane toward an awakening of their own. Our confusions ever come from a tendency to mistake any one of our states of consciousness for ourselves. While we are "inside looking out," everything appears only as reflected or colored by that state. The man of wisdom realizes that on any one plane he perceives

but reflections of other levels of being, while the man of ignorance believes himself to be looking at "things as they are." Both the man of ignorance and the man of wisdom act according to their awareness of their own states of consciousness—each setting up causes according to his lights. All other beings on that plane receive the effects, for good or for evil.

These are some of the reasons for man's great responsibility. He is one with all life and intelligence because he shares the capacity to learn and unfold, and because this capacity is the essence of all intelligence. Manifestation, the production of worlds and forms, is for interaction among all forms of intelligence, from the lowest to the highest. Man's "seven principles" place him in direct contact with all planes of being. If he fails to analyze the states through which he passes daily, he must pass through unconsciously, mistaking one plane for another. If he seeks to understand the planes of being, and learns to identify himself with them at will, he is on the way to realizing his responsibility to nature, through understanding of all the degrees of intelligence mirrored in himself. He becomes a force for the good of beings on every plane; more, through an understanding of the significance of his own higher nature he comes into rapport with still higher intelligences—beings who are willing and ready to help all others to reach the goal of evolution.

ATAVISM OF MODERN LIFE

Spirituality is on its ascending arc, and the animal or physical impedes it from steadily progressing on the path of evolution only when the selfishness of the *personality* has so strongly infected the real *inner* man with its lethal *virus*, that the upward attraction has lost all its power on the thinking reasonable man. In sober truth, vice and wickedness are an *abnormal, unnatural* manifestation, at this period of our human evolution—at least they ought to be so. The fact that mankind was never more selfish and vicious than it is now, civilized nations having succeeded in making of the first an ethical characteristic, of the second an art, is an additional proof of the exceptional nature of the phenomenon.—*The Secret Doctrine.*

TRAGEDIES OF BLIND BELIEF

NEARLY two-thirds of all the evil on earth, it is said, is caused by religion. This is so terrible an indictment of an institution generally regarded as conducive to good, that only after due consideration and analysis can its justice be perceived. At the first blush it seems impossible that all the vice and crime, the sickness, poverty, war, pestilence, and famine—in short, all the horrors symbolized by the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—should be only half as causative of evil as religion, which—theoretically, at least—is supposed to combat evil.

Religion, for the large majority, is merely a matter of upbringing and environment. Dogma is implanted during the impressionable years of childhood, accepted by minds in their uncritical stage. This psychological fact is well recognized by the Roman church, which asks only the first seven years of a man's life. Such mental and moral enslavement is successful, of course, only with the unthinking, but these, alas, compose the great majority. The minority sooner or later perceive the unreasonableness, indeed, the absurdity of religious tenets: of a God who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving, yet has created, out of nothing, a world so full of evil—and maintains it so; who has created man in his own image and yet so full of faults; who, though omnipotent, is unable to overcome an adversary, Satan, also his "creation"; a God who commands the ruthless extermination of one set of his children by another—the Jehovah, who set Jews against Canaanites; who abrogates the course of natural law instituted by himself so that the slaughter may be more promptly accomplished; a God to whom one set of believers can pray for victory over another set of the identical faith, and so on *ad infinitum, ad absurdum.* When intelligent people contemplate such doctrines their reason rebels, and they break their religious bonds, plunging for the most part into negative agnosticism or even into positive materialism. A few may find comfort in metaphysics and philosophy and in a life of good works, and these are most likely, sooner or later, to embrace Theosophy.

The negations of agnosticism and materialism—both sequences of blind belief—contribute to the weakening of ethical standards, with consequent decline of moral conduct. Woe unto the race where materialism becomes the governing conviction! The evils springing from such a reaction to false beliefs may very easily account for two-thirds of the world's woe.

But what of the direct effects of dogmatic religion? Let us first consider the doctrines accepted in past centuries by millions of

sincere, even devout, believers. Orthodox Christianity teaches some sort of anthropomorphic god and his *alter ego,* the devil; a world created out of nothing; an immortal soul similarly produced from nowhere for no good reason, and fated by whim to go on forever, either in heaven or in hell; a "savior" god-sent to redeem the world from sin for which, in the last analysis, that god himself must be held responsible; the vicarious atonement of this savior and salvation by unreasoning faith in him; and so on, again *ad infinitum, ad absurdum.*

It is this mixture of marvelous nonsense which even the saints believed, and for which the martyrs suffered. But they did not suffer alone; they, or their severer brethren, caused countless thousands incredible tortures, often from benevolent motives—the weirdest inversion in history. There is no better example of how good intent coupled with philosophic error can cause immeasurable misery than the Auto da Fé ("act of the faith") of the Holy Inquisition. Torquemada is pictured as a gentle, loving, indeed, a saintly man (see Victor Hugo's drama), but he burned among his many victims those whom he loved most dearly. And quite logically; if, as he firmly believed, the fires of an eternal hell threatened them because of their heresy, it was an act of wisdom and love to consign them to the purifying flames.

This is sad enough—sadder still is the fact that the example of such strong though misguided souls has confirmed weaker and still more ignorant ones in their superstitious beliefs, holding them in servile bondage to priestcraft. The classic example is the sale of indulgences whereby the pope as representative of God on earth absolved sinners not only for the past, but also for future transgressions. You might commit murder without fear of punishment, provided you could pay enough and could escape the arm of temporal justice.

And yet, granting the premises of theology, the conclusions embodied in these beliefs are quite "logical." God is omnipotent. He sends his son to save the world by dying a sacrificial death. First, however, the son appoints a Successor and gives him the keys to Heaven. This successor appoints another, and the line is established. One of these successors needs money badly; he is building the finest church in the world—*ad majorem dei gloriam*—and so he prints indulgences which his emissaries peddle throughout Christendom. What could be more consistent with dogma?

Luther put a stop to this abuse, but not to the doctrine on which it was based. Vicarious atonement is still accepted by orthodox

church-goers, weakening the minds and morals of millions. Its extreme effects are to be seen in the prayers for success which Italian bandits offer to their patron saints; Spanish pirates used to do the same; and the prayers of repentant murderers at the foot of the gallows are related phenemona. Though sins be as scarlet, they are made white as snow. This elevating doctrine notwithstanding, a more "practical" code proceeds to hang these snow-white lambs "by the neck until they are dead."

It would lead too far afield to follow the evil effect of religion in all its ramifications. Enough has been said to illustrate the basis for attributing two-thirds of human woes to the false doctrines of priestcraft. It cannot be denied that the Russian communists are right in saying that religion is the opiate of the people. Such a view, while mainly destructive, at least clears the ground of the superstitious rubbish of centuries, accumulated under the rule of a religion as crude as it was corrupt, leaving the land free for the rearing of a temple which shall yet house a finer faith. Sooner or later there must come an inevitable reaction against the negations of materialism, when the inherent spiritual nature of man will assert itself and demand expression.

What form will this expression take? There is the possibility that it will be Theosophy, in essence, if not in name. Such a consummation could hardly come about before the arrival of the next Messenger in the last quarter of the century, and some great moral change is certainly in store for the humanity of that cycle. There may then be a world-wide revival of practical moral philosophy, a change for which the seeds are already planted in America, where the last messenger appeared and performed his active work, and where still greater results may be expected in the future—depending largely on the attitude and efforts of present-day theosophists.

Cyclic Return

Historical facts will remain . . . concealed from view by the inextricable jungles of modern hypotheses, denials and scepticism. But very happily *actual* History repeats herself, for she proceeds, like everything else, in cycles; and dead facts and events deliberately drowned in the sea of modern scepticism will ascend once more and reappear on the surface. . . . —*The Secret Doctrine.*

ON THE LOOKOUT

Bad Omens for Democracy

Whatever else it may be, the democratic "way of life" is certainly a *rational* way. This means that the citizens of a democracy must arrive at national determinations by thinking instead of feeling, through the exercise of constructive and critical judgment as opposed to emotional action and reaction. When thought fails in a democracy, to that extent democracy itself must fail. This, in brief, is the measured conclusion of Dr. Carl Becker, professor of history at Cornell University, writing in the Summer, 1939, issue of the *Yale Review,* under the title, "When Democratic Virtues Disintegrate." Our pre-occupation with short-range satisfactions, he feels, if not corrected, can lead only to the loss of American democracy. He calls attention to ominous signs portending civil strife in America:

> The physical barricades are not yet up, are not, I should guess, likely to be in any near future; but the barricades of opinion are being raised. Evidence of it is to be seen in the disposition to call each other opprobrious but meaningless names, to label opinions rather than to discriminate them, to denounce criticism as disloyal rather than to estimate the amount of truth it may contain.

Dr. Becker traces these weaknesses in American democracy to the philosophy of pragmatism—the view that a statement is true if it serves a "practical" (read "immediate") end. The American belief that education is a means of preparing the young to "get on in the world" is a consequence of pragmatism; so also our disbelief in the value of disciplined thinking. Why do men call each other names instead of trying to understand the causes of common difficulties? Because, says Dr. Becker, they have not been trained to think. "We are indifferent to abstract systems of thought, incurious about truth apart from its application to concrete situations."

Unworthy Loyalties

It is often suggested that the democratic form of government is a practical working out of the pragmatic philosophy. But unfortunately, pragmatism, when applied to the levels of political and economic thinking, tends to elevate the immediate problems of these fields to supreme importance, with the result that the pragmatic analysis is almost always superficial, its solution concerned

with mere effects. Dr. Becker makes a telling application of this general criticism to politics in the United States.

> Devotion to political principles [he writes] rarely stands in the way of those practical compromises that give such impregnable coherence and tenacity to our political parties. With us it is peculiarly true that political parties exist less to promote political doctrines than to win elections—to win elections in order to put through measures that will benefit the country and the party by winning more elections. To be a useful party member one must therefore subordinate loyalty to doctrines to loyalty to the party program, whatever it may turn out to be. A party leader finds that it is not, as a general practice, better to be right than to be president. . . .

Lure of Expediency

Pragmatism, however successful as a method, rapidly reveals its weaknesses as a philosophy. Its emphasis on the principle of expediency obscures the value of other principles which are more important. Dr. Becker feels that the future of American democracy is threatened by a present failure to comprehend the principles of democracy. He says:

> Preoccupation with immediate concrete issues blinds us to the larger implications of these issues. The danger is that, still looking for "normalcy" around the next corner, we may suddenly find ourselves confronted with a situation too desperate to be mitigated by boondoggling, a situation which requires for its solution, a capacity to take the long-time view, to grasp the underlying conditions of social change, and to compromise on matters more fundamental than the incidence of a tariff schedule. We are, indeed, practiced in the art of compromise, but the art has been learned, for the most part, in devising ways and means of implementing principles that no one has disputed, or realizing short-time purposes that seemed too obviously good to require any examination of their long-time effects. Confronted with a crisis that does not readily yield to the improvised short cut, the easy optimism with which we commonly ignore unpleasant truths and dismiss theories as of "no use in practice" may very well prove a serious handicap.

The "Right" to be "Wrong"

Take, for example, the "theory" of freedom of speech. There are many who think we should forcibly suppress all "un-American" opinions, forgetting that the very soul of Americanism lies in the

free expression of opinion—that the right to examine opposed ideas is the principle which protects us from *im*posed ideas. The public square and the conference table are symbols of self-government; deportation proceedings and police interference with free assembly symbolize something else. Men forget that in a democracy it is the worst subversion of all to combat so-called "subversive influences" by any other means than education. If an "alien ideology" wins converts in a democracy, imprisoning the agitators will not help matters. If our people value the economic security and political preferment promised by demagogues more highly than the freedom they now possess, it is because their education has led them to prize things more than principles, a full stomach more than a free mind.

A Higher Goal

The problem of modern democracy is but a phase of the larger problem of human selfishness. Dr. Becker has pointed out the consequences of short-sightedness in our national life, but national failure is only a reflection of an individual failure to look beyond personal wants to the realm of more universal needs. Pragmatism is the philosophy of persons and their limited horizons, and it very easily becomes the basis for rationalized selfishness. Theosophy, like pragmatism, is a philosophy of experience, but here the analogy ends. The experience in which the student of Theosophy seeks verification of his ideas includes the life of soul, the root of all human solidarity. The goal of life is neither economic nor political, but *spiritual.* Men will never achieve lasting unity on the lower levels of political and economic activity until they recognize the source from which all unity is derived. So long as the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation are regarded as of "no use in practice," and universal brotherhood a "visionary ideal," so long will our modern pragmatists have to "learn by doing" that *what* they are doing accomplishes nothing.

A "Mystic"?

Many writers have called Hitler a mystic without a great deal of clarity as to what they mean by the term. It has been noted that he is a vegetarian, that he touches no liquor, that he has little interest in the opposite sex. The following excerpt from "The Ides of Mars," an article in the May, 1939, *Commentator,* throws interesting light on the possible nature of this "mystic":

> In his chalet in the Bavarian Alps he consults his "hunches." Never has he made any serious decisions in Berlin, and the magnificent new government palace in Wilhelmstrasse seldom sees him. . . .
>
> His father, Alois Schicklgruber (who changed his name to Hitler) was known among the townspeople of Braunau, where Adolph was born, as an excellent medium. Braunau has long had a reputation for its spiritualistic séances. No other Austrian town has as many famous mediums as Hitler's birthplace.

Articulate Discontent

Some thoughtful observations on the international problems precipitated in Europe by the German Chancellor were recently offered by Algernon D. Black, of the Society for Ethical Culture. He said:

> Those who would remove Hitlerism, for the most part lack any true diagnosis and make little effort to understand the cause of the difficulty. Hitler in himself is not a noble or a great figure. He is important because he is typical, because he sums up in himself many of the feelings and thoughts which surged through the masses of German people in 1932-33. He is important in that he is our product, the product of our civilization, the product of mass production—mediocre, frustrated, discontented, wrathful. Hitler is important because he was able to articulate what others felt and was able to organize and arm that discontent, and force the world to face its greatest spiritual problem.

Perhaps, if we could look back into history ten thousand years, we might find the explanation of much that is Karmically so puzzling. The figures of history, great in power for good or evil, are, says H. P. Blavatsky, "but reflexed images of human types which had existed ten thousand years before, in the preceding decimillennium, reproduced by the mysterious powers controlling the destinies of our world." (*Isis Unveiled* I, 35.) There are, she wrote elsewhere,

> . . . the great Racial Cycles which affect equally all the nations and tribes included in that special Race; but there are minor and national as well as tribal cycles within those, which run independently of each other. They are called in the Eastern esotericism the *Karmic* cycles. In the West, since Pagan Wisdom has been repudiated as having grown from and been developed by the dark powers supposed to be at constant war and in opposition to the little tribal Jehovah—the full and awful significance of the Greek Nemesis (or Karma) has been entirely forgotten. (*The Secret Doctrine* I, 642.)

JUSTICE TO PARACELSUS

The debt owed by modern chemistry and medicine to Paracelsus is slowly being recognized. For centuries historians have repeated the lies of his contemporaries and perpetuated the belief that the great Theosophist of the sixteenth century was "a coarse and ignorant charlatan," but today, following the careful studies of the history of science during recent decades, a new and more truthful estimate of his character is finding its way into print. A new text, *Chemistry for the General Student,* by M. S. Dunn and W. P. Everote, is free from derogation of Paracelsus, calling him "famous for his marvelous medical knowledge and cures." In *The Renaissance and the Reformation* by Henry S. Lucas (Harper & Bros., 1934), the services of Paracelsus to medicine are acknowledged to have been "of great importance." This writer observes that Paracelsus accumulated "a vast amount of knowledge" during his extensive travels, commenting:

> The old-fashioned view that Paracelsus was a quack and of no account has been exploded. On the contrary, he was a skillful physician and surgeon, employing the best pharmaceutical and chemical knowledge of his day in his healing art, and thus laying the foundations of the important iatrochemical school of medicine in the next century (pp. 362-3).

"BASIL VALENTINE"

One of the most thoughtful works on Paracelsus written from the modern scientific point of view is *Paracelsus,* by John Maxson Stillman, professor emeritus of chemistry at Stanford University until his death in 1923. This book, published by The Open Court in Chicago in 1920, has probably done much to bring a more just appraisal of the work of Paracelsus. Besides being a good account of his life and teachings, it assembles the appreciations of a number of eminent historians of science, leaving little doubt as to the value of the work of Paracelsus to modern science. Of particular interest in this book are the pages devoted to the so-called "Valentine writings," attributed to a Benedictine monk alleged to have lived early in the fifteenth century, a century before Paracelsus. These works, which were published by Johann Thölde about 1600, gave the appearance of being an important source of Paracelsian ideas, and one of the charges against Paracelsus was that he had plagiarized from Basil Valentine's *Triumphal Chariot of Antimony.* Thölde professed to have translated these works into German from

the Latin manuscripts. Prof. Stillman, however, summarizes the researches of the historians, Kopp, Sudhoff, Ferguson, and Lasswitz, all pointing to the conclusion that, "the Basilius Valentinus literature was a forgery or series of forgeries of the beginning of the seventeenth century, and that in all probability Thölde the publisher was himself the author." If this is true, the writer of the *Chariot of Antimony* drew on Paracelsus, and not the other way about. Prof. Stillman observes:

> By the relegation of these writings to their true period, the relative importance of the chemical literature of Paracelsus is greatly enhanced. It is to him that we must turn for the initiative to medical chemistry as well as for its propaganda; to him also the credit is due for the first announcement of many interesting though by no means epoch-making chemical facts. Through this revision of history also Paracelsus is freed from the odium of plagiarism and consequent lack of originality which in the minds of the majority of medical or chemical students has so long attached to him (p. 97).

It may be noted that in the latest (1936) edition of William Dampier's *History of Science,* Valentine is still credited with having been a predecessor of Paracelsus, and the latter referred to as a "quack doctor" who "aroused the probably well-deserved opposition of vested medical interests." This latter remark is an unfortunate blemish in a book that is generally impartial and without the conscious materialism of many histories of science.

"The Anthropology of Sex"

Bernard DeVoto, conductor of the *Harper's* department, "The Easy Chair," devotes his October essay to musing on the social effects of "scientific" morality. Moved to such considerations by the recent death of Havelock Ellis, first of the modern pioneers in dealing with the mystery of sex, Mr. DeVoto honors the courage of the British physician who in the last century turned iconoclast against the "know-nothing" prudery of the Victorian code. Ellis approached the subject as a problem in biology. His *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1889-1914) is a mass of data in regard to sexual customs, but it is *not* a "Psychology" of Sex. On this point hinges a grave question raised by Mr. DeVoto. A better title, he says, would have been *The Anthropology of Sex,* and he doubts the wisdom of publishing such dangerous "facts" in unorganized form. Our modern "liberated" attitude toward sex is generally regarded as an important cultural advance, yet in many ways the "enlighten-

ment" has proved disastrous. Since works like those of Ellis are intended to clarify certain problems of human conduct, their actual as well as their intended influence on morality must be considered. If possession of the "facts" tends to wreck the lives of ordinary men and women, do not these facts demand extremely judicious interpretation for the general public? Is any fact truly such before its moral significance is comprehended?

FACTS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

Intelligent interpretation seldom follows immediately upon the presentation of facts which attack the very foundations of orthodoxy. The facts of sex assembled by Havelock Ellis did exactly that. Just as the body of research left by Charles Darwin was forced into channels of extreme materialistic development, due chiefly to theological denial and fulmination, so the facts of sex received their theoretical organization at the hands of the late Sigmund Freud. Freud's psychophobic doctrines are an interpretation of the facts which literally obsesses many of the most intelligent members of modern society.

THE MORAL PENDULUM

After publication of his monumental work, Havelock Ellis was vilified as a subverter of morals and his book condemned as obscene; yet it was widely read—for one or another reason, as with most books labelled "obscene"—and its enormous influence gradually became evident. Undermined by such forces, the already decaying structure of Christian morals soon lost its authority, becoming an amorphous collection of pious platitudes. The morality founded on revelation was defined as mere social taboo, and man now could choose his own moral code in the light of the very latest biological information.

This has been an attractive doctrine to many, who have enjoyed the added sanction of being "modern" and "scientific" in matters of personal conduct. But time has shown, as Mr. DeVoto remarks, that "all freedoms are stern, and every person of mature years has friends for whom this one has been disastrous." He seems, however, to regard ignorant prejudice as the only alternative to such disasters: "The strength of conventions, prejudices, and intolerance is that they protect the weak by making up their minds and determining their behavior from without." A society, he thinks, "might be better armed against disintegration if it could conserve the forces which enlightenment dissipates." But what kind of *enlightenment*

is this which leads to disaster? Spartanlike, Mr. DeVoto accepts the "facts" of science, including even the theories of Freud, but thinks that their implications should be revealed with the greatest care. There is an element of truth in this contention, reminiscent of the principle behind the separation of the Wisdom-Religion into the esoteric and exoteric doctrines, but how warped is the application of this principle to modern problems! The materialism of science now assumes the position of *esoteric truth.*

Heart Versus Head

Diderot, the French humanitarian and encyclopedist of the eighteenth century, wrestled with the same problem which confronts Mr. DeVoto. Diderot synthesized the materialism of his age into what he regarded as a philosophy of logical perfection—and never published the result. Diderot, the man of morals and conscience, refused to accept the conclusions of Diderot the intellectual. The thought of the havoc which his book might bring about through removal of the old dogmatic restraints caused him to withhold from the press the result of a lifetime's study.

Materialism has played a tragic part in the intellectual development of the West. The analytical discipline of nearly all materialistic doctrine makes it a most effective weapon against irrational theology, but once this ally is claimed by workers for freedom, the poison of animalism soon taints all the achievements of the reformers, until finally the only escape seems to lie in a return to the old religion. But between materialism and idiotic anthropomorphism there must be a philosophical mean, a reconciliation. The work of Theosophists is to point to this middle path, the path which leads to Truth. Mr. DeVoto's essay is evidence that modern thought is approaching another cross-roads of decision.

Heredity and Environment

According to Dr. H. H. Plough, of Amherst College, "Sudden shocks of heat or cold speed the production of the abrupt evolutionary changes known as mutations." (*Science,* Sept. 1, 1939.) Amherst scientists subjected a species of small insects, the Drosophila or fruit fly, to quick jumps and drops in temperature, with the result that mutations appeared at considerably higher rates than in insects kept at ordinary temperature levels. Mutations are considered to be basic changes in heredity, the basis for the emergence of new physical types. While there is no question but that physical organisms do undergo modifications in accordance with changes in

environment, the important element in this discovery is that mutations affect the constitution of the germ plasm, and are not mere temporary adaptations. The problem in the science of heredity today, as in the past, is not to establish the *fact* of changes, but to understand how and why they take place.

LAW OF ADAPTATION

Unfortunately, the method of biology, which is largely dependent on the unnatural conditions of animal experimentation, does little more than produce a welter of mystifying and conflicting "facts," a confusion worse confounded. Occult law is nonetheless vaguely shadowed in the Amherst findings. During a discussion of the antiquity of the human species, H. P. B., having called attention to the flint axes found by Boucher de Perches, observes: "Now, if we have indisputable proof that man has existed so long as this, there must have been wonderful modifications of his physical system, corresponding with changes of climate and atmosphere." (*Isis Unveiled* I, 155.) On the same subject she wrote in *The Secret Doctrine:* "Species and genera of the flora, fauna, and the highest animal, its crown—man, change and vary according to the environments and climatic variations, not only with every Round, but every Root-Race likewise, . . . " (II, 262.)

WHENCE ROOT TYPES?

The occult doctrine of evolution has no quarrel with natural science over the details of physical adaptation of the species to their environment. It rather points out that while modern evolutionary theory has much to say about the species after they have arrived at the point of major differentiation, it tells *nothing* as to how the root types of the species themselves came into being. And this is the real question. As put by H. P. B.:

> Those purely *secondary* causes of differentiation, grouped under the head of sexual selection, natural selection, climate, isolation, etc., etc., mislead the Western Evolutionist and offer no real explanation whatever of the "whence" of the "ancestral types" which served as the *starting point* for physical development. The truth is that the differentiating "causes" known to modern science only come into operation after the *physicalization of the primeval animal root-types out of the astral.* Darwinism only meets Evolution at its midway point—that is to say when astral evolution has given place to the play of the ordinary physical forces with which our present physical senses acquaint us. But even here the Darwinian Theory, even with the

"expansions" recently attempted, is inadequate to meet the facts of the case. The underlying physiological variation in species—one to which all other laws are subordinate and secondary—is a sub-conscious intelligence pervading matter, ultimately traceable to a REFLECTION of the Divine and Dhyan-Chohanic wisdom. (*S. D.* II, 648-9. *Cf.* "Kosmic Mind," in this and the preceding issue of THEOSOPHY.)

MYSTERIES OF MIND

From the editorial department, "Of Things Beyond," in Street and Smith's pulp thriller, *Unknown* (October, 1939), we take the following paragraphs:

We know a bit of the world of material things; we know so piteously little of our own minds. We know so little of the vast possibilities that pure mentality has, and infinitely less of the art of controlling the powers we know it has.

By the exercise of will alone, a man can paralyze an arm or leg—or bring on death. But not by conscious application of that will. A man brought to the operating table for a very minor, entirely safe little operation, protesting complete absence of fear. An anaesthetist suspicious that the man actually was fearful. The anaesthetist, to ease the patient's mind, dropped plain water on the choloroform mask at first, to relax tension. At the third drop of water—*the man died*!

Only superstitious natives can be killed by fear, they say.

If pure will can kill a healthy man—what might pure will, *controlled,* do for a dying man? Pure will can—men know now by actual experience—blank out all pain, or pain from one region of the body, immobilize an arm or leg. "Hysteric paralysis," doctors call it. Suppose they used that a bit to immobilize a wounded arm to give it time to heal? Suppose they learned a bit about man's mind and learned to stop the useless agony of neuritis?

ANCIENTS HAD SELF-KNOWLEDGE

We've learned a lot of the world and how it works in the past century; I wonder if, in learning that, we haven't forgotten, and even consciously buried a lot of immensely valuable knowledge of man's mind that ancients knew. They had no laboratories, no reagents and tools. But laboratories, reagents, tools and meters don't help much in the study of so immaterial—yet potent—a thing as will. Before men had facilities to study material things, the seeker after knowledge had but one channel for his curiosity, the channel forgotten almost today—the study of the mind.

> We know far more than the ancients did, of course. So any scientist can prove. They had no laboratories.
>
> The ancients might have something more to say; they had no laboratories—so they studied man!

The writer of these penetrating observations is John W. Campbell, editor of *Unknown*. When we realize that the editorial policy of any periodical must keep in line with the interests and ideas of the bulk of its readers, his remarks assume significance. Both editor and publisher recognize that there is a growing hunger for real knowledge of *man,* that there is a new spirit of inquiry abroad in the land. Why should not the humble "pulps," which count their circulation in *millions,* reflect "the search for the long-exiled spirit of man and the now lost TRUTHS"?

OUR "NEW" INVENTIONS

A report in *Science,* Sept. 8, 1939, provides evidence in support of the statement in *The Ocean of Theosophy* that, "Individuals and nations in definite streams return in regularly recurring periods to the earth, and thus bring back to the globe the arts, the civilization, the very persons who once were on it at work." According to the Science News dispatch:

> The compression ignition principle of the Diesel engine was invented by Malay natives at least a thousand years before it was invented in Germany. Herbert W. Krieger, curator of ethnology at the U. S. National Museum, supports this claim by showing one of the old high-compression fire lighting gadgets of the Malay Peninsula, considered the most efficient fire-making idea that primitive man ever thought of. It is a tightly wrapped plunger which is forced into a wooden cylinder by a blow of the hand. At the bottom of the cylinder is a bit of tinder, which lights when the blow compresses the air in the cylinder, thereby generating heat. Crediting primitive men with other brilliant inventions, Mr. Krieger says that the textile industry was saved millions of dollars of royalties when an invention for winding cord so that it could be unwound with even tension turned out to be similar to an old Fiji idea. A Fiji twine ball, in the National Museum, prevented patenting of the device.

As Mr. Judge says: "the souls who made the most ancient civilizations will come back and bring the old civilization with them in idea and essence, which being added to what others have done for the development of the human race in its character and knowledge will produce a new and higher state of civilization." (*Ocean,* p. 119.)